



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

he finds "charming" and "amiable." From its own standpoint, which we cannot now discuss in detail, his book is a most successful and charming piece of work.

W. G. JORDAN

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
KINGSTON, ONT.

FOLKLORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The three stately volumes of Sir James Frazer on *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*¹ raise expectations which they do not altogether fulfil. A work with such a title by the gifted author of *The Golden Bough* and of such generous proportions naturally leads the reader to suppose that he is at last in possession of all the available data upon the subject. An analysis of the contents of the book will indicate how far this is from being the case. There are some 1,620 pages of reading-matter and an index of 85 pages. These 1,620 pages are distributed into four parts: "The Early Ages of the World," Vol. I, pp. 3-387; "The Patriarchal Age," Vol. I, pp. 391-569, and Vol. II, pp. 1-434; "The Times of the Judges and Kings," Vol. II, pp. 437-571, and Vol. III, pp. 1-90; "The Law," Vol. III, pp. 93-480.

It would seem as if under these four rubrics and in the abundant space allotted to them all the folklore in the Old Testament could be included. But what have we actually got? In Part I but five topics are discussed: "The Creation," "The Fall," "The Mark of Cain," "The Flood," and "The Tower of Babel." But of the 385 pages assigned to this part, 258 are given to "The Flood" alone. In Part II ten topics are covered: "The Covenant of Abraham," "The Heirship of Jacob or Ultimogeniture," "Jacob and the Kidskins or the New Birth," "Jacob at Bethel," "Jacob at the Well," "Jacob's Marriage," "Jacob and the Mandrakes," "The Covenant of the Cairn," "Jacob at the Ford of the Jabbok," and "Joseph's Cup." But of the 600 odd pages devoted to this part, nearly 400 are given to the two subjects of ultimogeniture, or the right of the youngest son (138 pages), and Jacob's marriage (248 pages). In these two monographs, for that is what they are, the author has wandered far away from his immediate field. Nearly half of the first of these is taken up with a discussion of the meaning of the *jus primae noctis*, which has to do with an ecclesiastical custom in the Middle Ages. The excuse for this digression is the fact that the

Folk-Lore in the Old Testament. By James George Frazer. New York: Macmillan, 1919. 3 vols. xxv+569, xxi+571, xviii+566 pages. \$15.00.

"right" has been used (incorrectly) to explain the rise of ultimogeniture. What Sir James has to say upon this subject is both interesting and informing, but it has really nothing to do with the Old Testament. The same is true, in even a greater degree, of the second monograph. Advantage is taken of the fact that Jacob married cousins and sisters to give a highly technical though absolutely exhaustive discussion of cousin-marriage and the marriage with a wife's sister (for which Sir James suggests the name "sororate marriage" as an analogous term to the levirate). The study will prove undoubtedly most valuable to all investigators of the institution of marriage, but the length of it does seem a bit out of proportion to the biblical fact which it is supposed to illustrate.

In Part III there is a more varied series of topics: "Moses in the Ark of Bulrushes" (giving accounts of the exposure of celebrated men in their infancy, with a suggestion that such exposure may be a reminiscence of a water ordeal to test legitimacy); "The Passage through the Red Sea," "The Waters of Meribah," and "Gideon's Men" (three chapters of 13 pages); "Jotham's Fable" (a delightful little chapter containing stories of rivalries between trees, with a full citation of Callimachus' beautiful poem on the debate between the laurels and the olive, recently discovered among the *Oxyrrhynchus papyri*); "Samson and Delilah"; "The Bundle of Life" (I Sam. 25:29); "The Witch of Endor" (an excursus on necromancy); "The Sin of a Census" (instructive examples of the fear among primitive peoples of being counted or of having their possessions counted); "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" (stories collected from Josephus, later Jewish literature, the Koran, the Celebes, etc.); "The Judgment of Solomon" (with a parallel from Jain literature); "The Keepers of the Threshold"; "The Bird Sanctuary" (Ps. 84:3); "Elijah and the Ravens"; "Sacred Oaks and Terebinths" and "The High Places of Israel" (two chapters which give a convenient résumé of customs, especially in the Semitic world); "The Silent Widow" (on the supposition that the Hebrew word for "widow" and "dumb" may be etymologically related analogies are adduced from savage peoples who enjoin silence on widows); "Jehovah and the Lions" (II Kings, chap. 17); and "Jonah and the Whale." Only a page and a half are given to Jonah, with one illustration from New Guinea. At this point there is the most painful *lacuna* in the book. Surely Sir James, who has pondered over so many quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore, cannot be ignorant of Hans Schmidt's *Jona!* To give so large an amount of space to rehearsing the Flood stories,

with which even the general reader is more or less familiar, and to ignore the equally interesting Jonah stories which Schmidt has collected and which are probably largely unknown is, to say the least, unfortunate.

It is in Part IV, which deals with the Law, that we would expect the greatest amount of illustration in a work dealing with folklore, for much of the ritual law is imbedded in the most primitive customs and ideas. Sir James subsumes what he has to say on the Law under seven topics: "The Place of the Law in Jewish History" (a summary of the critical view of the Old Testament, but which with a very doubtful historical judgment upon the religious value of high places as contrasted with a central sanctuary, Vol. III, p. 105, and a somewhat romantic view of the beauty of such worship, Vol. III, p. 106, to both of which opinions Hosea, chap. 4, may serve as an antidote); "The Command Not to Seethe a Kid in Its Mother's Milk"; "Boring a Servant's Ear"; "Cuttings for the Dead"; "The Bitter Water"; "The Ox That Gored," and "The Golden Bells."

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that we do not have in this work a methodical study of the folklore in the Old Testament. It is rather significant that, while the topical index leaves nothing to be desired, there is actually no index of Scripture passages. The book is for the most part a collection of essays on a comparatively few topics. Judged by the natural cravings of the Old Testament student, the book must accordingly be pronounced somewhat disappointing. Yet even in the act of passing this criticism I feel that an apology is almost due for making it. The book is so charmingly written and contains such a vast amount of interesting folklore material that it seems almost ungenerous to test it by its title. And perhaps in one way the title is justified after all. Sir James has contrived to weave about certain biblical stories or ideas or expressions so firm a texture of primitive thought and practice that it is impossible for one who has read the book any longer to separate the Old Testament from the strange world out of which it grew. This result is due in large measure to the artistic element which is so strong in Sir James Frazer's writings. The work as a whole is not simply a thesaurus for research students but a work of art. Judged from this point of view there is justification of the extended descriptions of biblical scenes and Palestinian scenery which abound in the book (see for example Vol. II, pp. 41, 79, 81, 410, 503, 507, etc.), and which from a purely professional and technical point of view could all have been dispensed with. The only regret is that these

descriptions, beautifully painted as they are, are not the result of personal observations, but are taken from the palettes of Robinson, Tristram, Sir George Adam Smith, and others (contrast the description of the scene at Panopeus in Phocis which the author saw himself, Vol. I, p. 6).

To turn from the general character of the work to a criticism of details, I can choose only a few specimens out of the wealth of material provided to illustrate the qualities of the book. Sir James gives us a new interpretation of the fall of man. He is troubled by the character of Jahweh as presented in the second and third chapters of Genesis. Jahweh is seemingly reluctant to give immortality to man. He is jealous of man's equalization with God, which this would imply. The story is therefore held to be a distorted form of a more original tale in which Jahweh appears in a better light. The entire blame for the loss of immortality is now laid, not on man's disobedience or God's jealousy, but on the deception by the serpent. Two motifs are supposed to underlie this original of the story, the motif of the change of skin and the motif of "the perverted message." Among primitive peoples animals like the snake or the crab, which change their skin, are supposed to be endowed with immortality. Again, the loss of immortality has often been explained by the fact that some animal or other agent who was commissioned by the deity to announce the gift of immortality to man has perverted his message. Accordingly it is suggested that the two trees in Eden were originally a tree of life and a tree of death (the critical view that the two trees belong to two different sources is rejected). God commanded the serpent to tell man that he must eat of the tree of life and not eat of the tree of death. The serpent reversed this message (a most perverted message indeed!). The man ate of the tree of death and lost his immortality, while the sly serpent ate of the tree of life and so was enabled to change his skin and live forever. The stories cited to illustrate the two motifs are interesting and suggestive, especially the idea of immortality as associated with the change of skin, which may help to account for the demonic quality attributed to the serpent and the ready acquiescence of the woman in the serpent's promise, to which Sir James does not allude. But are these primitive motifs which are *not* found in the Genesis story better able to account for it than the primitive motif of the jealousy of the gods which *is* found in it? The explanation of the mark of Cain as a mark to frighten away the victim's ghost appears to have much to commend it in the parallels adduced, in which homicides blacken their faces, tattoo or disguise themselves in various ways for this purpose. The additional

advantage which Sir James finds in this explanation, that it relieves the absurdity of God putting a mark on Cain to protect him from human assailants when there was nobody living at that time to attack him, is doubtful. Has Sir James forgotten that Cain built a city, according to the same passage? To attempt in this way to avoid "the irreverence of imputing to the deity a grave lapse of memory little in keeping with divine omnipotence" is to adopt an apologetic point of view little in harmony with the spirit of these early stories.

A much more convincing essay is the one upon the meaning of Gen. 15:17 (the covenant with Abraham). Have we here a retributive or a sacramental theory of sacrifice? Striking analogies to both theories are adduced, and it is maintained in accordance with these that there were two parts in the rite, the dividing of the victim, which expresses the retributory idea (may the one who breaks the covenant be thus cut in two), and the passing between the parts of the victim, which is intended to symbolize the sacramental union of the covenanter with the sacrifice, just as in the more primitive forms practiced among the Baralong of South Africa the parties to a contract would crawl through the hole made in the stomach of the sacrificial ox (Vol. I, p. 397). Incidentally, possible light is thrown upon the bisected skeletons of a boy and girl at Gezer by the custom of the Wachaga tribe in East Africa of solemnizing a covenant by cutting a boy and girl in two and burying the four halves at the boundaries of two districts (Vol. I, p. 423). Gen. 27:15, 16 gives occasion for the description of many customs connected with sacrificial skins and new births. Thus the Gallas cover a child's neck and wrists with the sacrificial fat and skins at adoption (Vol. II, p. 7). On the basis of this and much similar evidence it is suggested that in the original story of Genesis, chapter 27, the kidskins were used in a ritual that was observed when a younger son was advanced to the position of the first-born. The author of the present form of the story is supposed to have completely misunderstood the ancient ritual. While there is possibly more to be said for Sir James's interpretation of this passage than for his view of the original meaning of the Fall, still I doubt whether it will be generally adopted by scholars. At least the apologetic use of it in Volume II, page 2, will scarcely be accepted.

Much instructive material is collected on the worship of sacred stones in the chapter on Jacob at Bethel, and it is interesting to observe how Sir James seems to feel the difference between the massebah at Bethel which Jacob anointed and the baetyls of the Greek writers

(Vol. II, pp. 76, 77). But he does not seem to be acquainted with Professor G. F. Moore's exhaustive and conclusive discussion of this subject in the *Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America*, (Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 198 ff.), which shows that the massebahs, and baetyls were not the same in spite of Gen. 28:19.

There is an informing discussion of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, a "jinnee" of the river, and many instances of propitiations of spirits in rivers and at fords are cited. But when, on the basis of Greek stories of the metamorphoses of water-spirits in their struggles with various heroes, the suggestion is made that the wind, fire, and earthquake in the original narrative of the Horeb vision may have been similar disguises assumed by a reluctant deity, fancy would seem to have prevailed over sober interpretation. The interpretation of the Samson stories as a solar myth is rejected, a "Humpty-Dumpty" theory, which has been set up only to be knocked down again. The strength in the long locks of Samson and the betrayal of Samson by Delilah both have interesting analogies in the folklore of other peoples. Two very instructive chapters are those on "The Bundle of Life" (I Sam. 25:29) and "The Sin of a Census." The expression "bundle of life" is connected with the very materialistic conception of the soul entertained by many primitive peoples, according to which the soul can be extracted from an individual and even bound up with other souls, a theory developed at length in the author's *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul* (compare the *churinga* of the Australian Aruntas, Vol. II, pp. 508 ff.). The interpretation in this connection of Ezek. 13:17-21 as a reference to witches attempting to catch souls in cloths, and the explanation of the phrase *בִּתְיֵי נֶפֶשׁ* as "soul boxes" or amulets in which the well-to-do ladies of Jerusalem may have kept their souls, are certainly attractive. The collection of various superstitions concerning the threshold throws light on the functions of "the keepers of the threshold" at Jer. 35:4. Compare Marco Polo's description of the keepers of the threshold at the palace of Kublai Khan and the Mongol saying, "Step not on the threshold; it is sin" (cf. Zeph. 1:9, Vol. III, pp. 2 and 4). A number of parallels are cited to the birds nesting at the altar, the idea being that the sanctuary protects the birds. But the textual difficulties at Ps. 84:3 are ignored, and the divergent view which regards the presence of birds about a sanctuary as a defilement is unnoticed. Josephus tells us of the provision made to keep the birds from alighting upon and defiling the temple roof (*Bell.* v. 5. 6). A Japanese student once quoted the Japanese proverb to me: "Where there is a swallow, there is no

God." No exact parallels are adduced to the command not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk, but many curious milk taboos among pastoral peoples are cited, especially the custom of not boiling milk and the custom of not eating flesh and milk together. The idea, based on sympathetic magic, seems to be that the milk would be in some way injured by these practices, and that this would involve injury to the herd. The prohibition at Exod. 23:19 may well have been such a milk taboo, whose infraction would injure the herd. The importance of such a law for a pastoral people would easily account for its presence in the earlier form of the Decalogue (Exod. 34:26).

The custom of boring a slave's ear furnished a text for a treatise on various forms of mutilation among savage peoples, which is continued in the chapter on "Cuttings for the Dead." The climax of these gruesome details is found in the chapter on the "Bitter Water" (Numbers 5), to which the poison ordeal as practiced in Africa offers many striking analogies. To offset the horrors assembled in these three chapters the work closes with two chapters of a very different character. The one on "The Ox That Gored" cites many quaint and humorous instances, principally from Europe in the late Middle Ages, of animals formally tried and condemned at law. The last chapter on the golden bells of the high priest's robe discusses the belief in the power of bells and gongs to drive away evil spirits. The paragraphs that treat of the superstitions connected with the ringing of church bells are among the most charming in the book.

In the chapter on the Tower of Babel an Ashantee story is cited (Vol. I, p. 378) of how once upon a time men attempted to scale heaven by piling a lot of porridge pestles one on top of the other, till all were used up and the sky was not yet reached. Then a wise man stood up and suggested that they take the lowest pestle and put it on the top and keep on doing so "till we arrive at God"! As one reads the pathetic strivings of primitive man to find God, it seems as hopeless an undertaking as the Ashantee attempt. Yet in the course of time there were to arise men like Isaiah, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Luther, who *did* find God, and though speaking in diverse tongues, confused and stammering, yet were able to tell us of their great discovery and point out to us the way of access to Him who bears with our follies as well as pardons our sins.

KEMPER FULLERTON .